

Parks and Recreation: Equal Access for All

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Mississippi River Forum

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MN & Twin Cities Region

- **Consistently high ranks:**
 - Best State in the Nation (2015)
 - Best State for Business (2015)
 - Best State for Women (2015)
 - Top State for Children (2015)
 - Best Park System in the Nation (2013/2014)
 - Healthiest City in the Nation (2015)
 - Top City for Biking (2014)

Current Racial/Ethnic Disparities

“If growing racial inequalities are not addressed, Minneapolis could find itself one of the nation’s poorest cities when it comes to racial politics and urban decline.”

(Source: Nickrand, 2015. Minneapolis’ White Lie. *Atlantic Monthly*.)



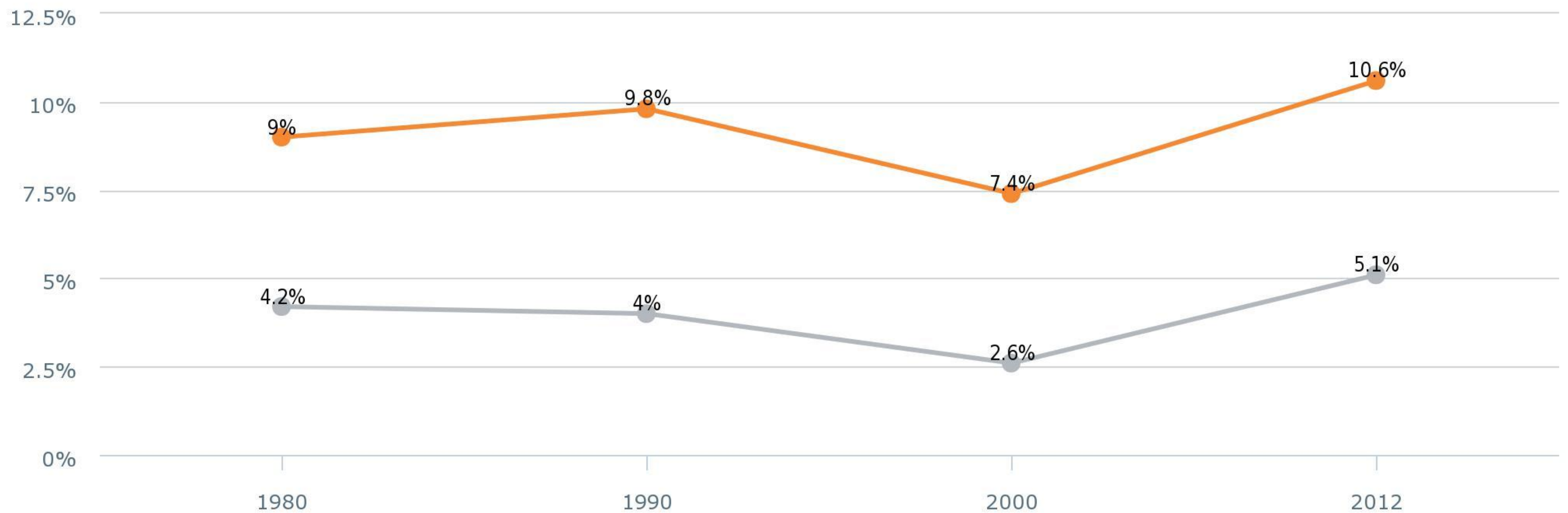
Current Racial/Ethnic Disparities

- Minnesota and the Twin Cities region:
 - **Highest racial disparities in the nation**
 - Education
 - Criminal justice
 - **No reductions in disparity rates since 2000:**
 - Criminal justice
 - Education
 - Health
 - Economic opportunities

(Source: *Disparity Analysis: A review of disparities between White Minnesotans and other racial groups, 2013*)

MN Unemployment by Race/ Ethnicity

White
People of color



IPUMS
PolicyLink/PERE National Equity Atlas, www.nationalequityatlas.org

MN Obesity and Diabetes Rates by Race/Ethnicity

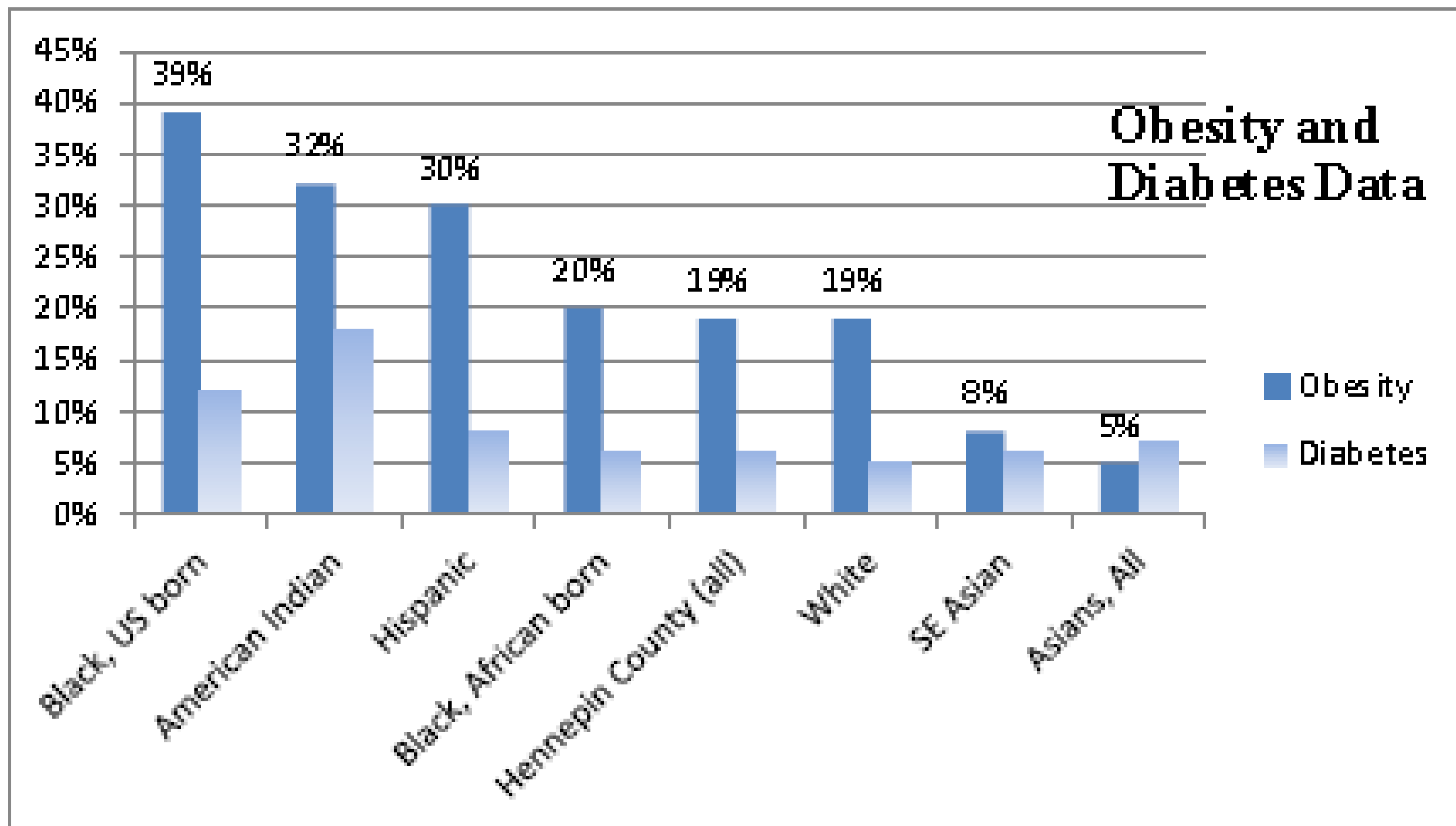
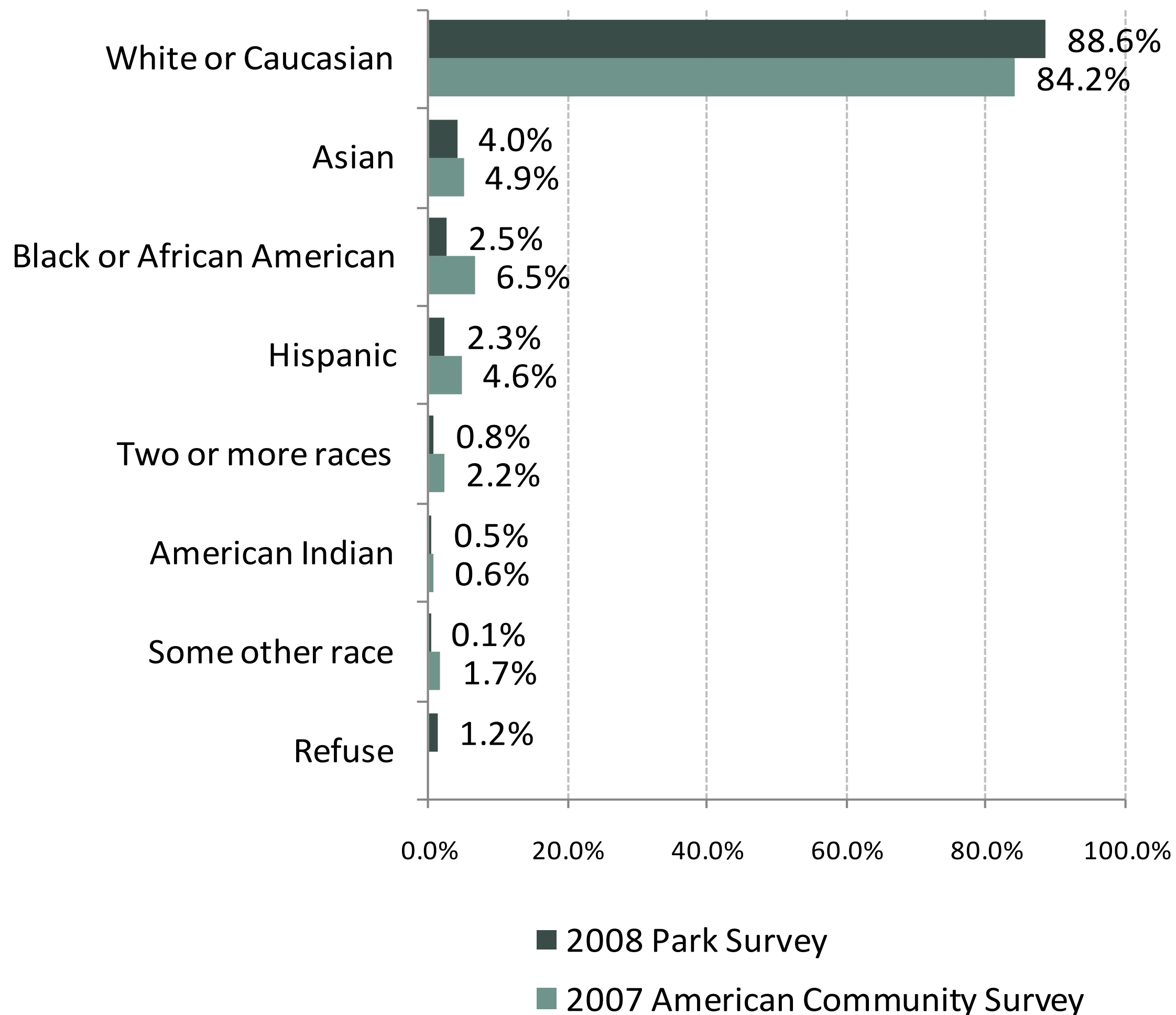


Figure 3: Obesity and Diabetes Disparities

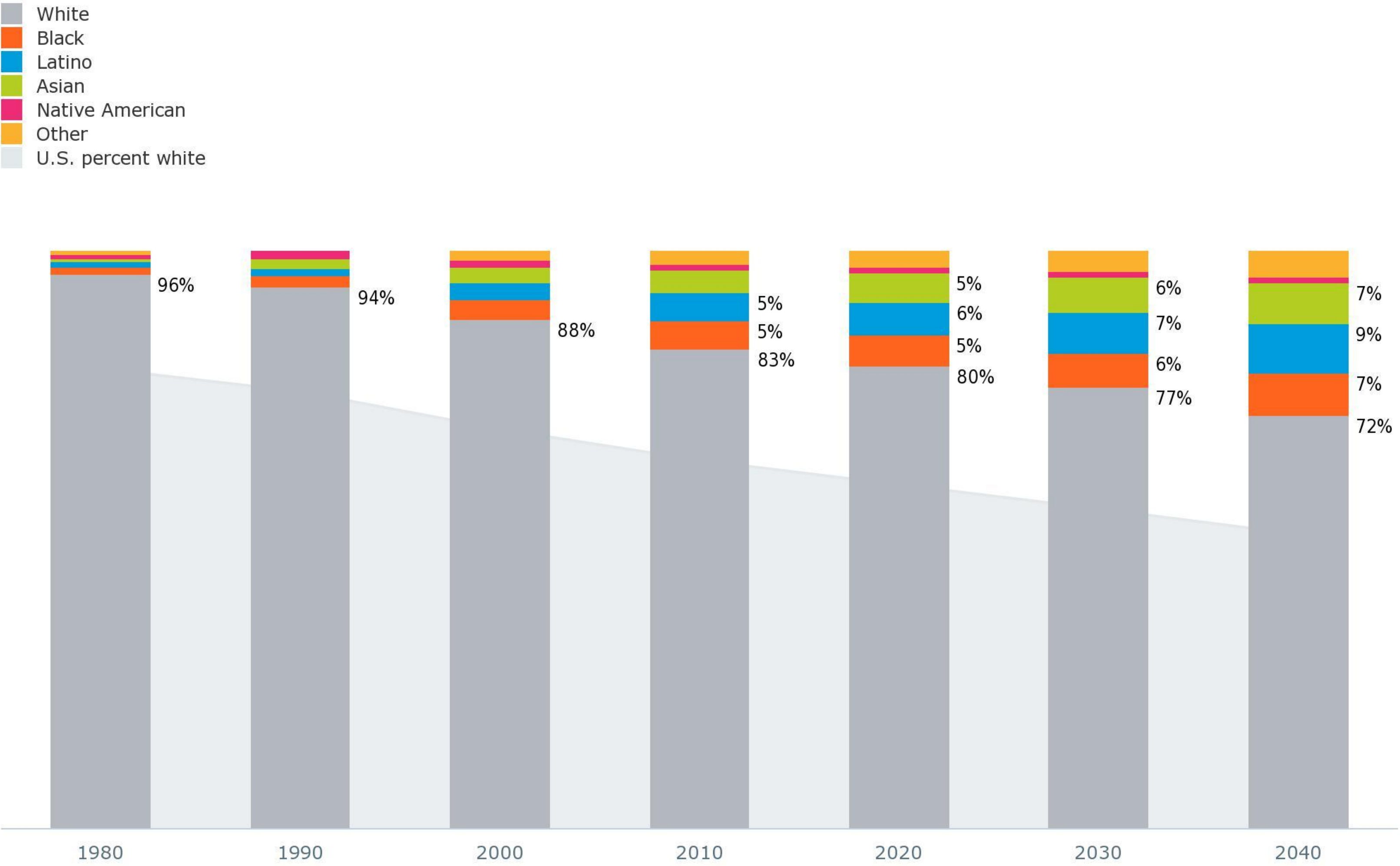
Source: *"The Unequal distribution of health in the Twin Cities"*. Wilder Foundation, 2010.

Regional Park Use by Race/Ethnicity



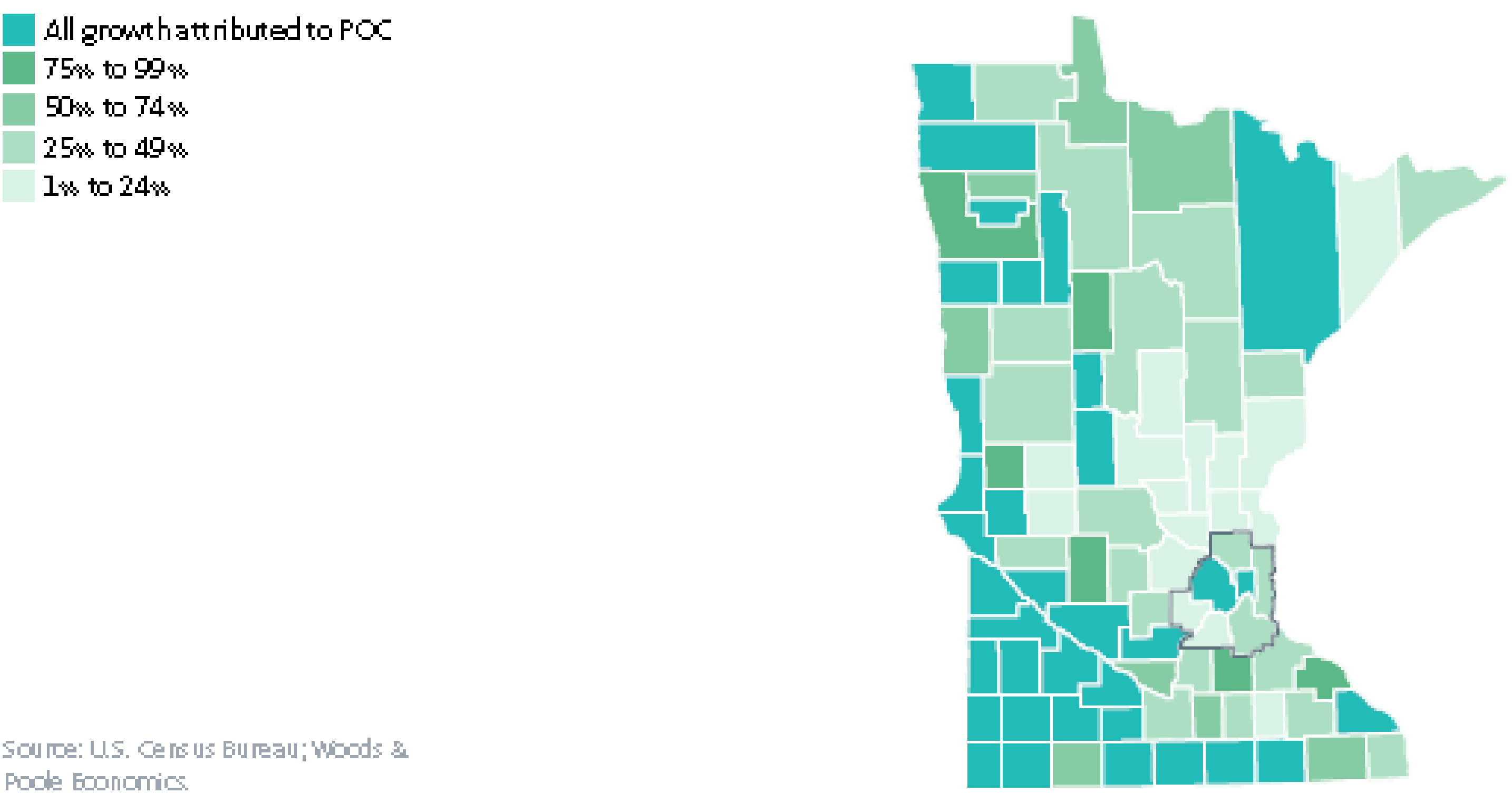
(Source: Metropolitan Council. [Regional Parks 2008 Survey](#))

Racial/Ethnic Composition: MN



Communities of color will continue to drive Minnesota's population growth.

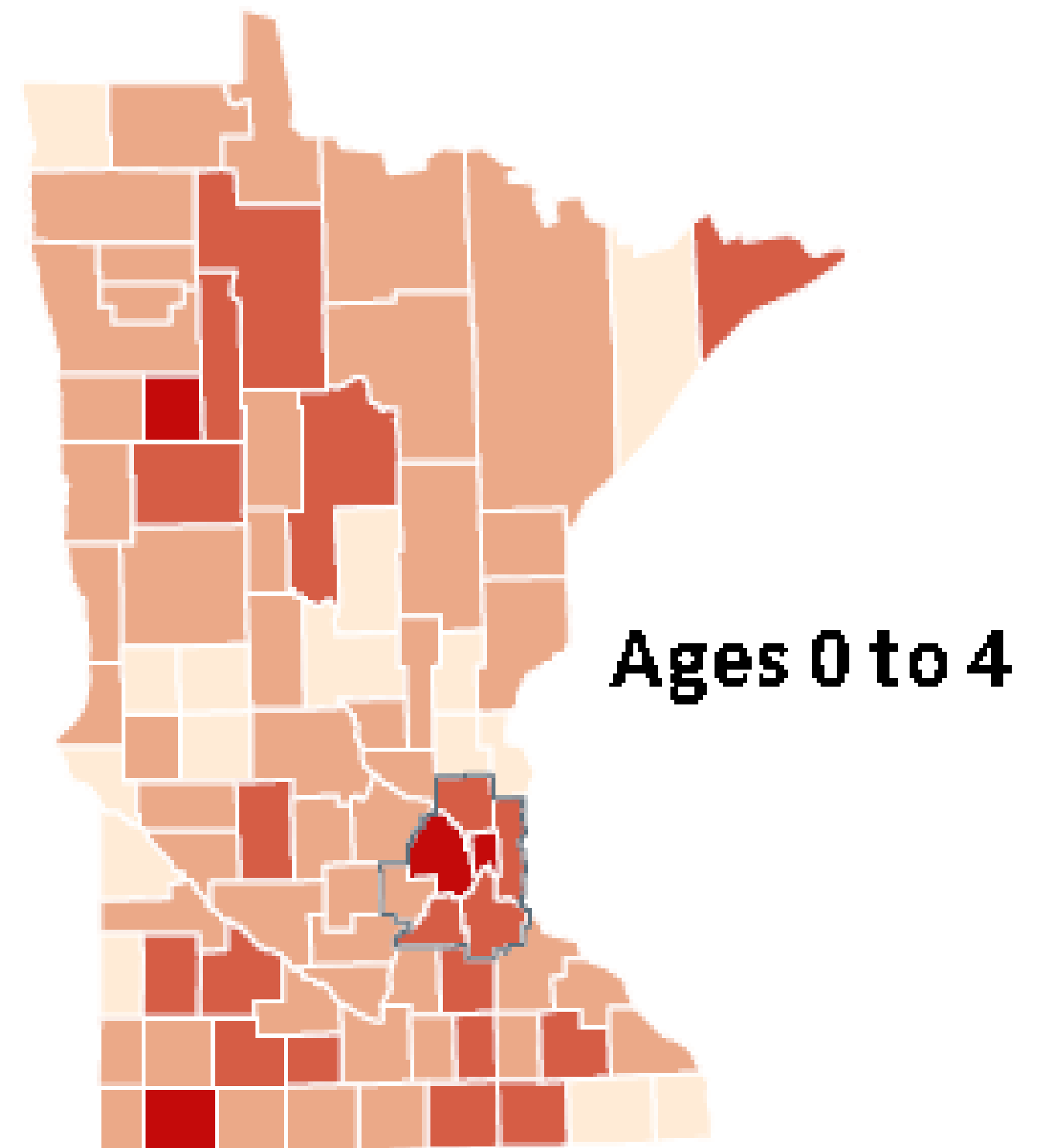
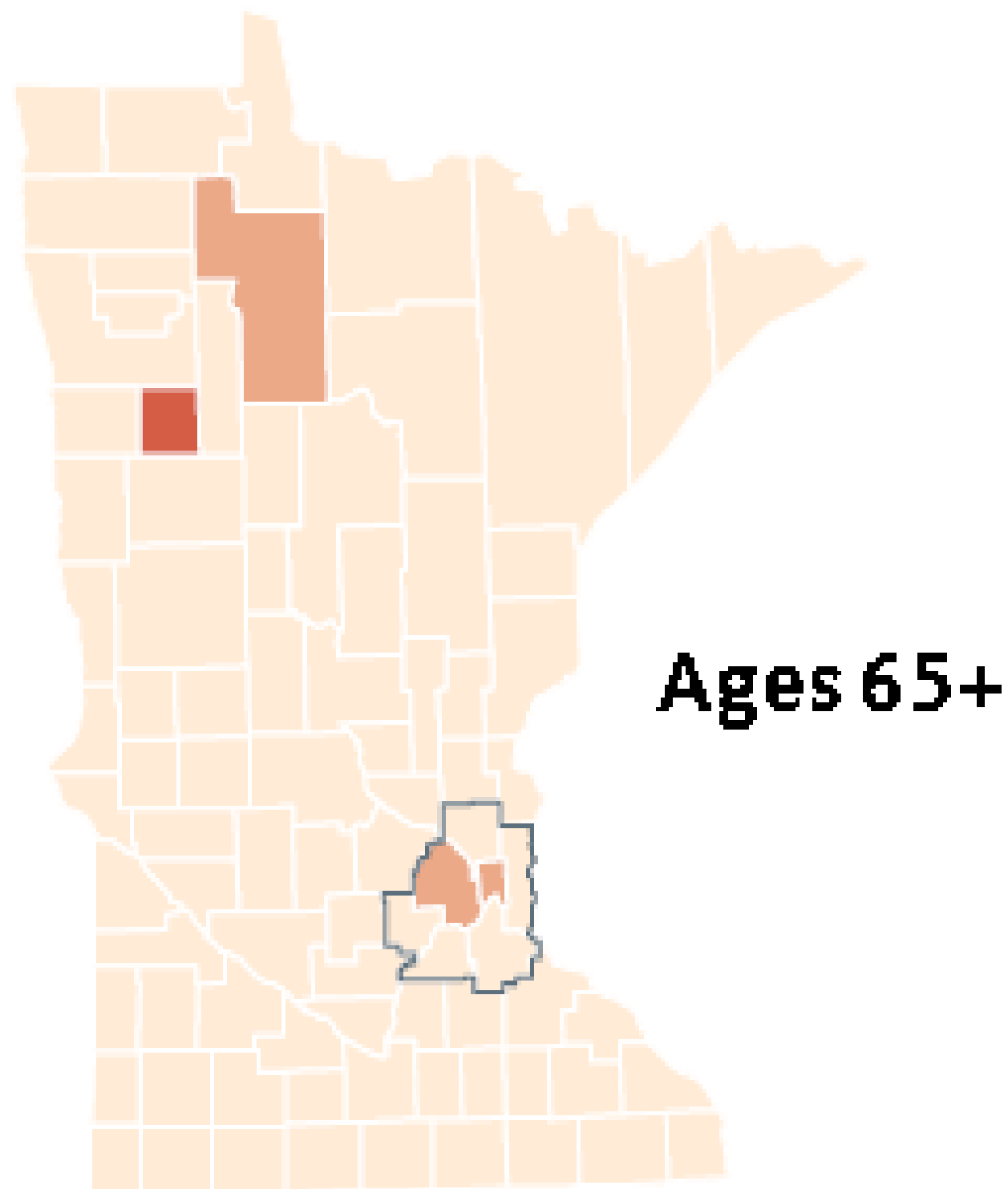
Share of Population Growth Attributable to People of Color, 2010 to 2040



Minnesota's youth are much more diverse than its seniors.

Percent People of Color by Age, 2010

- Less than 10%
- 10% to 19%
- 20% to 49%
- 50% or more



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Source: Minnesota's Tomorrow, 2014

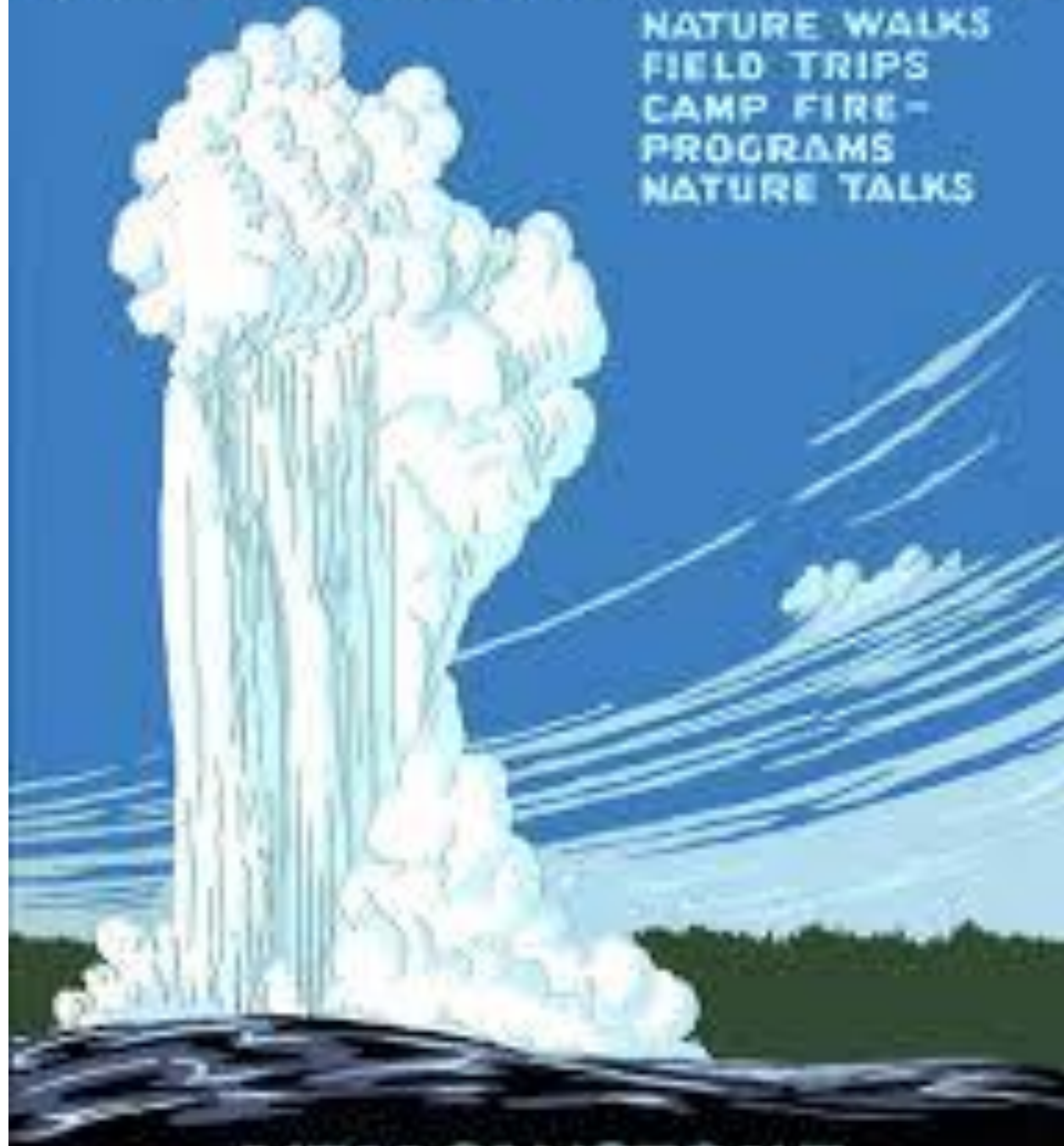
How are you addressing racial
and ethnic disparities in your
work?

How effective are you at engaging
or working with communities of
color?



RANGER NATURALIST SERVICE

NATURE WALKS
FIELD TRIPS
CAMP FIRE-
PROGRAMS
NATURE TALKS



YELLOWSTONE

NATIONAL

U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR



PARK

NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE







White Area — 1976 © Hulton Archive / Getty Images

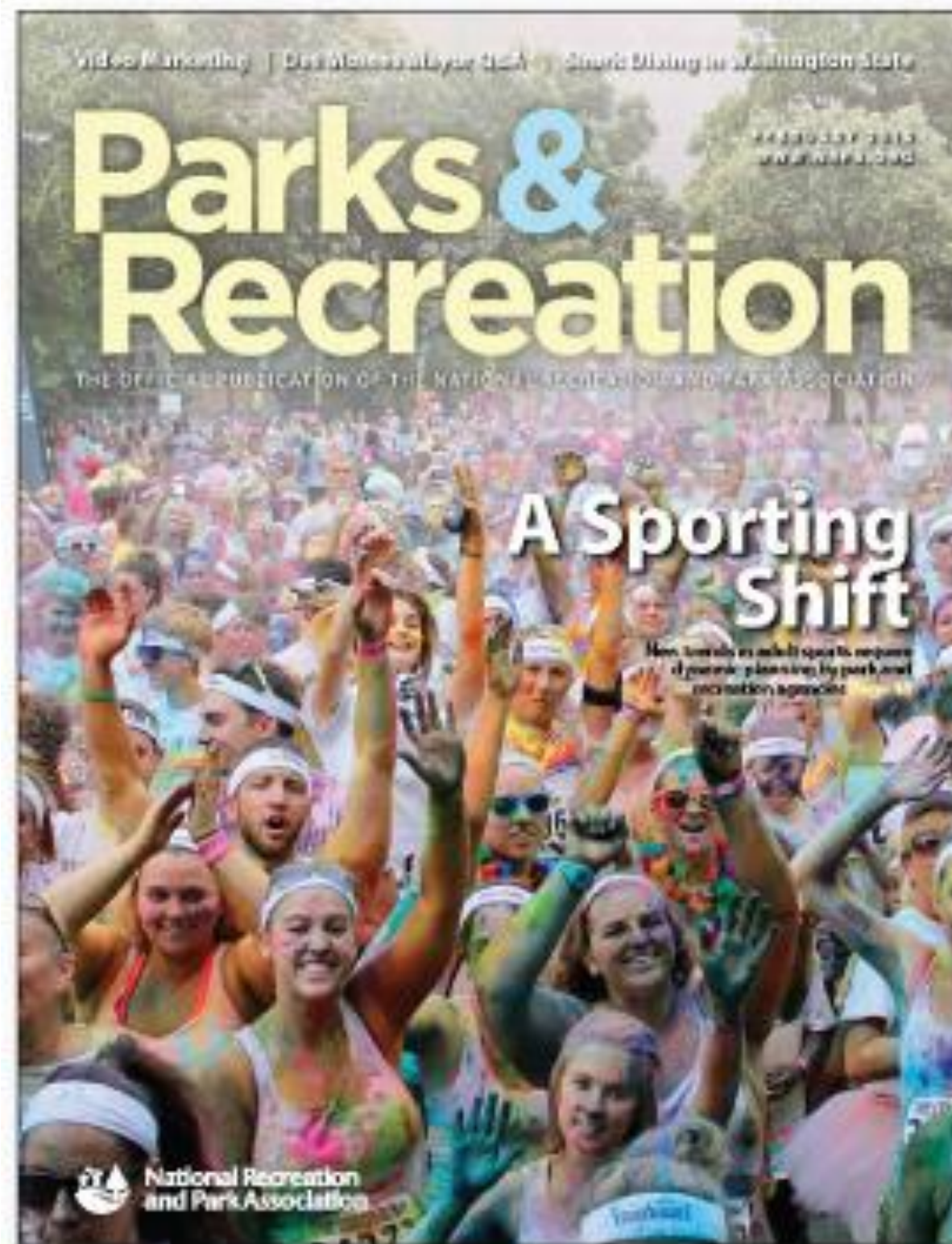
CAROLYN FINNEY

BLACK FACES, WHITE SPACES

Reimagining the
Relationship of
African Americans
to the Great Outdoors







“Even with all that color there is a lack of diversity. How ironic...”

(Matt Brubaker, Graphic Designer, Parks & Recreation Magazine)

- “You can’t change people by using your value system if they have a different value system than you do. ***The underlying assumption...is that the only reason a person in his or her right mind would not go camping and hiking is because they didn’t know about it or have the money or transportation.*** That’s been the assumption for well over 40 years, which means ***the perception is: We need to go out and change or fix the people who just don’t know what a great deal this is and tell them what a great deal this is and they’ll come, when in fact, the challenges are much deeper than that.***”

Mickey Fearn, former National Park Service Deputy
Director of Communications





Thrive Direction for Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks Policy Plan

- **Strengthen equitable usage** of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across race, ethnicity, class, age, ability and immigrant status



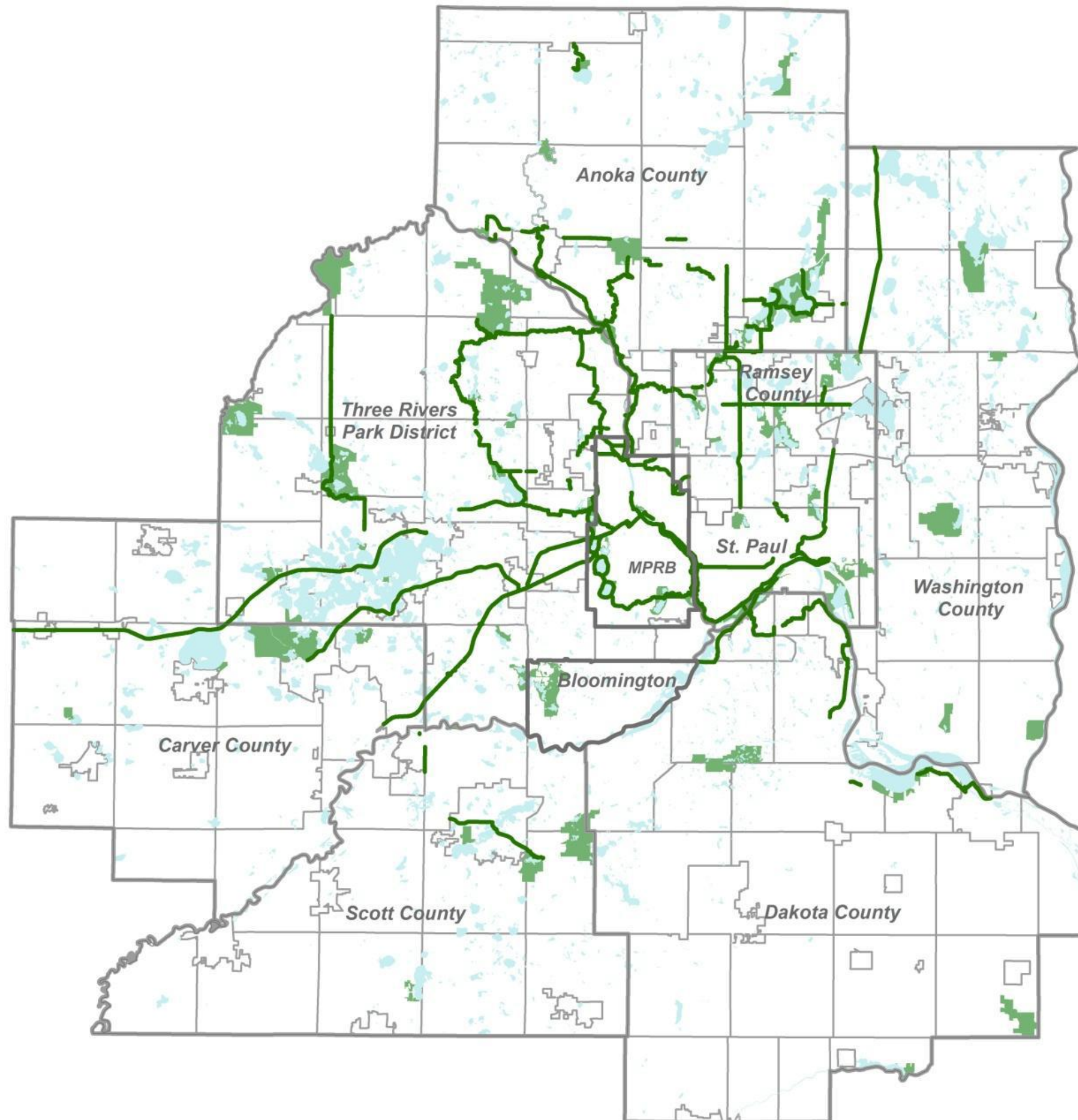
Lake Elmo Park Reserve—
Washington County



Dakota Rail Regional Trail—
Three Rivers Park District



Regional Parks System Facilities Open to the Public (2014)



Regional Parks System

7 Metropolitan Counties

- 54,000 acres
- 340 Regional Trail Miles
- 42 Regional Parks
- 12 Park Reserves
- 8 Special Recreation Features



2014-2015 Effort

- Explore non-utilization of regional parks and trails among distinct subpopulations within the region.

Specifically, the study sought to explore:

- Preferred outdoor recreational activities and desired amenities
- Perceived barriers that prevent use of the Regional Park System
- Issues or concerns about the Regional Parks System
- Recommendations and suggestions to enhance visitation

Study Approach

- Partnered with community-based organizations
- Conducted *region-wide* focus groups
 - Audio recorded
 - Transcribed
 - Qualitative data analyzed
 - Coded
 - Emergent Themes

Focus Group Composition

	Number of Focus Groups
Diverse Composition	5
Asian Immigrant/ Asian American	4
Hispanic/ Latino/Latina	3
African Immigrant	2
African American	2
Total	16

- Focus group size
 - Range: 5-36 people
 - Average=16 people
- **263 total participants**

Participant Demographics

- 74.6% Female
- Age Range: 14-79 years old
 - Average age=39.6
- **Children:**
 - **72.4% had children under the age of 18**
 - Range: 1-20 children
 - 64.2% had four or less children

47% of participants had never visited a regional park

Participants Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
African Immigrant	76	29.6
Asian Immigrant or Asian American	74	28.8
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	66	25.7
African American	28	10.9
Caucasian	11	4.3
Multi-Racial	1	0.4
Native American	1	0.4
Total	257	100.0

23 distinct primary languages

Preferred Outdoor Activities

	Top Outdoor Activities: All Groups
1	Walk/Hike
2	Picnic/BBQ
3	Use Playground
4	Swim/Go to Lake
5	Spend Time with Friends/Family
6	Bike
7	Fish
8	View Nature
9	Rest/Relax
10	Celebrate/Party

Preferred Outdoor Activities by Focus Group Type

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian Immigrant or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/Latino/Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
1	Picnic/BBQ	Use Playground	Walk	Celebrate/Party	Walk
2	Bike	Walk	Fish	Picnic/BBQ	Use Playground
3	Basketball*	Be with Family	Rest/Relax	Be with Family	Swim/Go to Lake

Who With?

- **Family**
- **Friends**
 - Very few: alone
- **Number of people typically with:**
 - Range: alone to 250 people
 - **Most frequently noted (same relative frequency):**
 - **Less than 5**
 - **15-20 people**

“Park”

	What comes to mind when the word “park” is mentioned: All Groups
1	Nature
2	Safety/Security
3	Amenities
	Animals/Wildlife
4	Playgrounds
5	Picnics/BBQ
	Walk/Hike/Trails
6	Celebrations/Fun
	Bonding with Friends/Family
7	Solitude/Relaxation

Park Visitation Barriers: All Groups

	Why it is hard to visit a Regional Park
1	Lack of Awareness
2	Time
3	Fear/Safety Concerns
4	Lack of Transportation Options
5	Language Barrier
6	Weather
7	Cost
8	Map Challenges
9	No One to Go With
10	Cultural or Religious Insensitivity/Discrimination
	No Desire

“I think visibility is also huge...I mean to be honest with you, a lot of people are not even really aware about regional parks”

(Female African American focus group member)

“I was just watching it someplace, and I don’t remember where, but they said Minnesota has got about 600 places where you can go camping and I only know of one.”

(Male Diverse Composition focus group member)

“For me, for example, coming from a different country, I don’t really know what exactly are the rules. Right? I don’t know about the times, and I didn’t even know they close the parks at night.”

(Male Diverse Composition focus group member)



“The thing is us Hispanics don’t know how to use the parks. We always go there to sit down and eat. We don’t know what activities can be done. Walking, for example”

(Latina focus group member)

“I think for a lot of people, if it’s not part of your culture—I mean, if you didn’t grow up going to the park with your family, you’re not going to necessarily think about going to the park yourself and you’re not going to teach your kids to go to the park either, especially if there’s no opportunity to really understand like why would I go”

(Female African American focus group member)



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Suggestions to Enhance Visitation: All Groups

	Suggestions to increase visitation
1	Increase Awareness
2	Address Safety
3	Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces
	Create Ambassador Program
4	Increase and Diversify Programming
5	Provide More Events
6	Add or Enhance Playgrounds
7	Enhance Nature Quality
	Address Dog and Goose Waste
8	Clean Restrooms/Facilities

How Do They Want to Hear It

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	Mixed Focus Groups
1	Local Organizations	Translated into Different Languages	Park Ambassador or Tour Guide	Local Organizations	Translated into Different Languages
2	Park Ambassador or Tour Guide	Friends	Friends	Targeted Newspaper	Local Organizations
3	Flyers/ Community Partnerships/ Targeted Newspaper	Flyers/Map TV Mail/Door Leaflet	Translated into Different Languages	Flyers/ Translated into Different Languages	Mail/Door Leaflet

Suggestions to Enhance Visitation by Focus Group Type

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian Immigrant or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/Latino/Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
1	Increase Awareness	Address Safety	Create Ambassador Program	Increase Awareness	Increase Awareness
2	Increase/Diversify Programming	Increase Awareness Clean Restrooms Add/Enhance Playgrounds	Address Safety	Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces	Increase/Diversify Programming
3	Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces	Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces	Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces	Address Dog Waste	Address Safety

“We have to pray like five times a day, so we’re supposed to have a place that we can pray...women and men are different. Men can pray everywhere, like outside, something like that. But the women, they’re supposed to have like a little cover, maybe a small room, something like that”

(Female African Immigrant Focus Group Participant)

“If there’s not a lot of people, it’s a little scary. But if there’s a lot of people, it’s not scary”

(Female Diverse Composition focus group participant)



Impacts

- “Authentic” Engagement
 - Clear, demonstrable evidence of contributions impacting decision-making
- Policy Development: 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan
 - 13 policy arenas to enhance equity
 - Convening and information
 - Funding and investment
 - Planning and design

Concluding Remarks



“How can we think about, talk about,
and give birth to a society in which
everyone belongs?”

(otheringandbelong.org)

Questions?

Report: *Regional Park Use among Select Communities of Color*

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